

EARLY
YEAES

[CHCAJP.
III

Oration for Milo
[impressive eloquence,
well-timed irony, and
subtle reasoning] . . . •
Gibbon, his chapter on
the Doctrine of the
Incarnation — as usual

Sapping a solemn
creed with solemn,
sneer.¹

Tuesday. • •
Kead Mitf ord: he is
deeply versed in
Greek literature, but his
style is wretched, nay,
scarcely Bullish, a striking
contrast to the cadenced
periods of the *Decline and
Fall*

Thursday. Voltaire — Critique
on the *Œdipus* of Sopho-
cles. Some just criticism mixed
with much frivolity and bad
taste. . . .

He then reads the (*Edipe*,
but with little satisfaction;
and 'a furious denunciation
against Oracles and Supersti-
tion, brazen pipes and
flagitious priests,' which he
finds in it moves him to the
following reflection: ' This is
a speech worthy of a French
Illuming ; but in the heroic
age *Philosophers* did not exist,
and the good men were
contented to obey and consult
those institutions which from
their youth upward they
were taught to respect and
reverence.' An intimate
friend of Disraeli's once, in a
moment of pique, described
him as a Voltairian in religion.
The description was not very
happy, for, as these boyish
jottings alone would show, the
Voltairian spirit aroused an
instinctive antagonism in a
mind cast from the
beginning in the Semitic
mould. And yet even thus
early the subtle contradictions
of a most complex character
reveal themselves. In a note-

book, which is probably not later than the period we have reached, we find this pencil entry in Disraeli's hand : 'Resolution.—To be always sincere and open with Mrs. E. Never to say but what I mean—point de moquerie, in which she thinks I excel.' Who.'Mrs. E.' may have been does not appear, but an anecdote that has floated down from the school-days at Cogan's bears witness to her discernment. The boys at Higham Hill who were members of the Church of England had to walk **some**

¹ *Childe Harold*, III.
107.